

2008 – 2009 Winter Hikes in California State Parks

Winter is a great time to take a hike in a California State Park. The air is brisk and clear, making it ideal to discover the variety of landscapes state parks have to offer.

It's important to wear proper shoes fit for hiking, wear a hat for sun protection, and bring water. And always check the weather forecast before your hike.

Here are some ideas for great winter hikes:

Southern California

LEO CARRILLO STATE PARK (LOS ANGELES/VENTURA COUNTIES), 28 miles northwest of Santa Monica on the Pacific Coast Highway, is a great place for a hike. Visitors should park in the parking lot and walk under the highway, and on to the sand. Continuing up the hill, visitors can stroll along the bluffs for a view of the kelp forest below, then on to the second staircase for a stroll through the sea tunnel, if the tide allows. A picnic in the cove can be a special treat. For more information, call the park at (818) 880-0350.

Central California

CASWELL MEMORIAL STATE PARK (SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY) offers visitors a leisurely ramble along the Stanislaus River. Various trail loops allow walks from .5 to 2.5 miles over relatively level terrain. The stately Valley Oaks that tower over the trails once sheltered the Yokut people, and welcomed the first European explorers with a familiar sight, so like the mighty white oaks of their homelands. Take the Austin Road exit west from Highway 99 at Manteca and continue seven miles until the road ends at the park entrance. Call (209) 599-3810 for more information.

Northern California

TOMALES BAY STATE PARK (MARIN COUNTY) has a splendid trail from Heart's Desire Beach to Indian Beach that can be done in a one mile loop. For more information, call the park at (415) 669-1140.

Visit California State Parks on line at www.parks.ca.gov

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